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SUBJECT: EUR DAS BRYZA'S BLACK SEA DISCUSSIONS IN ANKARA

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: EUR DAS Matt Bryza discussed Black Sea security with MFA, Turkish Navy and Turkish Land Forces officials during his April 4-6 visit to Ankara. Bryza expressed appreciation for what Turkey was doing to foster security cooperation among the littorals, suggested efforts were needed to focus BSEC's activities, and urged the GOT send a senior-level representative to the May 5 Black Sea Forum in Romania. Bryza's interlocutors explained Turkey's ongoing initiatives in the Black Sea, emphasizing the improved connectivity between Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH) and NATO's CCMar Naples since September 2005. They agreed on focusing more on "soft power" initiatives through BSEC. Turkish Naval Forces Command (TNFC) Plans and Principles Chief (N5) RADM Cem Gurdeniz noted that BLACKSEAFOR works by consensus and because Romania (and more recently Georgia) objected to the transformation of that organization, it was a dead issue. PMA and FM Foreign Policy Advisor Ahmet Davutoglu and MFA Deputy Undersecretary Rafet Akgunay said Turkey would participate in the Black Sea Forum, but the level had not yet been decided. End Summary.

Managing Risks Through Turkish Initiatives

12. (C) Akgunay, Gurdeniz and Turkish Land Forces Command (TLFC) Chief of Staff GEN Ergin Saygun all noted during separate meetings that the littoral states agreed that there are "risks" of smuggling of WMD, persons, drugs, and other things in the Black Sea, but there currently were no "threats." To ensure risks do not become threats, Turkey has several regional initiatives, including the creation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation zone in the 1980s, BLACKSEAFOR naval organization in 2004 and, in 2005, Turkey's own Operation Black Sea Harmony to which other littorals have been invited to join. They argued that NATO was already in the Black Sea by virtue of three of the littorals being Allies; Gurdeniz added that NATO's STAVNAVFORMED annually enters the Black Sea. Akgunay in particular argued that there was no need to reinvent the wheel -- existing organizations and programs should be better utilized to foster regional cooperation. On specific initiatives, they said the following:

-- BSEC: Akgunay recalled that BSEC included more members than just the Black Sea littorals, emphasizing that even Greece and Armenia were included. At first it was solely focused on economic issues, but it has expanded its horizons, as illustrated by the creation of a BSEC parliamentary group. DAS Bryza said the USG wanted not only to revitalize BSEC,

but also to focus its activities to make it more effective. He suggested that other regional initiatives such as SECI, SEECP and SEDM might be encouraged to work with BSEC on specific initiatives. Akgunay agreed. He noted that MFA was already at work on developing an agenda for the next BSEC meeting. He suggested that all the littorals should discuss new ideas openl and honestly, and lamented that members needed to participate more in BSEC's activities. Saygun greatly approved of the USG's concentrating on "soft power" initiatives through BSEC.

-- BLACKSEAFOR: Gurdeniz noted that BLACKSEAFOR would begin its next three-week activation on April 7 under Russian command. (Note: Command rotates among the members.) This would be the first time all six members would provide ships. While a Georgian officer had previously commanded BLACKSEAFOR, he had done so from the bridge of a Turkish vessel because Georgia lacked the assets to provide its own vessel; this time it will use a ship donated by Turkey. As an aside, Gurdeniz recalled that Georgia commanded an activation at the same time trouble was brewing in South Osetia. Despite kidnappings and shootings on land, the Russian captain and his ship remained under the Georgian command, even as the task force pulled into Novorossiysk for a port call. Gurdeniz underscored this as a success in BLACKSEAFOR's building regional cooperation. In addition, the force has produced collateral benefits, he said, as NATO is adopting the secure communications system BLACKSEAFOR use was being adopted by NATO to allow Allied vessels in Operation Active Endeavor to communicate with partner vessels. Bryza stated that the USG supports BLACKSEAFOR in its current form as a regional confidence building measure. Gurdeniz noted that BLACKSEAFOR works on the basis of

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consensus and since Romania and more recently Georgia have expressed reservations about transforming the organization, it would not happen. "If someone says 'no,' no one can criticize them," he added.

-- Operation Black Sea Harmony: Akgunay and Gurdeniz asserted that OBSH is a "NATO-led" activity because Turkey is a NATO member and it is a Turkish operation. They expected Russia and Ukraine to join the operation in the near future, and they asked Bryza to help convince Romania to join as well. Bryza said Washington would encourage both Bucharest and Sofia to cooperate more fully. Gurdeniz explained how early communication problems between NATO's Component Command Maritime Naples and TNFC had been resolved after a September 2005 meeting in Naples. OBSH now provides information hourly to CCMar Naples to feed into the Operation Active Endeavor data base of suspect shipping. Both he and Akgunay cited statements of appreciation from NATO for what Turkey is doing in the Black Sea. Gurdeniz thought Georgia and perhaps others misunderstood what OBSH was and what joining it meant.

He explained that each participant would patrol its own EEZ and share information at least with the other OBSH participants but preferably with NATO as well. Even if some participants do not share their information with NATO, he said, their information would go into TNFC's recognized maritime picture which is shared with NATO. One reason for avoiding joint operations was Turkey's desire to not have the Russian Navy patrolling its waters. After 12 wars with Russia, there is no way to predict Moscow's intent once the Russian Navy begins to grow again, he said.

Working out Differences with Neighbors and Allies

13. (C) Akgunay reported that Romanian and Turkish officials were scheduled to meet on April 6 to discuss "all aspects of the Black Sea." A trilateral with Romania and Bulgaria on military issues was also planned for the near future. Gurdeniz declared that based on his meeting with OSD/ISA/EUR the previous week in Washington, there was no difference

between the US and Turkish visions for security in the Black Sea. Both acknowledged that the Montreux Convention limits non-littoral naval presence in the Black Sea while emphasizing the treaty's utility in ensuring security and stability. Bryza told them both that the USG has come to appreciate the importance of Montreux, in conjunction with the Treaty of Lausanne, as a legal foundation of the Turkish Republic and how the Turkish Navy does indeed provide a NATO presence in the Black Sea. More NATO ships in the Black Sea was not the issue, ensuring security was. He was happy to hear that issues between OAE/CCMar Naples and OBSH/TNFC had apparently been resolved as Washington's desire was that the two operations work together harmoniously.

¶4. (C) Both Akgunay and Gurdeniz complained about apparent misperceptions within the USG about Turkey's policies toward the Black Sea Region. Akgunay said he kept hearing that Turkey opposes Georgia's eventual membership in NATO. This was not the case, he averred. (Comment: See reftel regarding GOT reservations about moving too fast toward Georgian NATO membership. End comment.) Similarly, both he and Gurdeniz vigorously denied rumors they had heard that Turkey was leaning towards Russia and away from NATO in the Black Sea. Gurdeniz in particular went on at length about Russian wrongs against the Ottoman Empire and Soviet affronts to the Republic of Turkey as reasons why Turkey could not befriend Russia. Nonetheless, Russian cooperation -- and not opposition -- in regional initiatives was essential to their success. Even during the Cold War, Turkey had been careful to avoid unnecessary acrimony with the USSR. GEN Saygun noted that Turkey had worked for decades to build operational naval cooperation in the Black Sea as reflected in BLACKSEAFOR and OBSH involving all littorals. Still, such cooperation should leave no doubt that Turkey's strategic home is within NATO.

¶5. (C) With Davutoglu and Akgunay, Bryza urged that Turkey send a senior representative to the May 5 Black Sea Forum in Bucharest. Both responded that Turkey would definitely be represented, although at what level had not yet been decided. Davutoglu agreed thsi should be at a high level, perhaps by the FM or himself.

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